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# **CLEVELAND COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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\*\*\*Media Alert\*\*\*

## **Give Kids A Smile Day**

*Local Dentists to Provide Free Dental Care to Cleveland County Children in Need*

(Shelby, NC)-- Approximately 60 third graders in Cleveland County will be smiling a little brighter thanks to more than \$16,000 worth of free dental sealants that will be provided to them during the 18<sup>th</sup> annual Give Kids A Smile Day this month. On February 12<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup>, and 25<sup>th</sup>, these 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students will be transported to local dental offices who donate their time and services to provide free sealants. The care is being provided as a result of the efforts of the Give Kids A Smile Day, which is a national event sponsored by the American Dental Association, NC Dental Society, local participating dentists, Communities In Schools of Cleveland County, Cleveland County Schools, the NC Oral Health Section, and the Cleveland County Health Department.

Give Kids A Smile Day partners with Communities In Schools and the state public health dental hygienist who help identify children who are in need of dental sealants. The number of children seen depends on the number of participating dentists. It all started back in 1998 with Seal the State in '98 and continued under a different name, Seal Out, and now it has changed to Give Kids A Smile. This initiative is not just local or statewide, but a national event in recognition of National Children's Dental Health Month. In the past 18 years, there have been over 2,000 students to receive dental sealants worth \$400,000 of free care!

Tooth decay affects more children than any other chronic childhood disease, in spite of the fact that it is almost entirely preventable. Nearly ½ of all 5 year olds have experienced tooth decay in baby teeth. According to a NC study, children with poor oral health were nearly 3 times more likely to miss school due to dental pain. 52% of Medicaid-enrolled kids in the United States went a full year without dental care—not even an exam. Every \$1 spent on prevention saves \$50 in restorative and emergency procedures. Not treating dental disease can lead to lifelong health complications such as malnourishment, bacterial infections, and emergency surgery; not treating infected (abscessed) teeth can be fatal. Dental disease has been linked to heart disease, stroke,

diabetes, pneumonia, and poor pregnancy outcomes. Give Kids A Smile increases awareness of the importance of good dental health for children and adults.

Thanks to these dentists, dental hygienists, dental assistants, and staff for volunteering their time and services to promote Give Kids A Smile 2016:

- Cornerstone Dental Associates (Dr. Kendalyn Lutz-Craver, Dr. Sara Karner, Dr. Steven Doering)
- Stroud, Wilson, Thompson Family Dentistry (Dr. James Wilson)
- Cleveland County Health Department Dental Clinic

For more information please contact Joy Shuford, public health dental hygienist at 704-473-4375 or Communities In Schools at 704-480-5569.

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